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21 January 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Collection Guidance Staff, DDCI

ATTENTION: [REDACTED] 25X1A9a

THROUGH: Chief, Economic Research, OPR

SUBJECT: Preparation of DCI Briefing Note on the Observation Post System Problem

REFERENCE: (a) 18 December 1963 Memorandum from DDCI on same subject
(b) ACIA Draft U.S. Position Paper on Observation Posts of 16 December 1963
(c) OPR/MC/TR Draft of 15 January 1964, "Proposed for an Observation Post System Based on Analysis of the Transportation System of the USSR and the European Satellites"

1. This Division has been requested to comment on two parts of the DDCI Memorandum cited in Reference (a) above: "OPR Advance Warning Capability" and "Impact on Other Intelligence Information Collection Systems." The following comments must be read in conjunction with the ACIA Draft U.S. Position Paper cited in Reference (b) above, which deals in depth with many of the problems posed by the DDCI Memorandum. In only a few cases do I feel required to supplement or dissent from the discussion contained in the ACIA Draft.
2. It should be noted at the outset that we are limiting our consideration of the advance warning capabilities of proposed Observation Post Systems to cases of attack by conventional surface forces. Although the ACIA Draft considers a wider range of attack possibilities such as air and/or guided missile attack forces, I agree with the DDCI decision to limit the scope of this discussion. My reasons for this are contained in Annex A.
3. In limiting the discussion to attack by conventional forces, we have implicitly limited the variety of Observation Post Systems which might be considered. In the course of investigating the remaining possibilities, it is the conclusion of this Division, after consultation with the Transportation Branch, OPR, that from among

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the alternative Observation Post Systems proposed in the ACIA Draft, there appears to be a "best" one. The criteria underlying this evaluation are the effectiveness of the various systems to detect the movement of conventional forces balanced against the numbers of Observation Posts required. The "best" system would position teams at rail transflowing zones along the Soviet border (and perhaps at key ports), and if possible would also include air-mobile teams in the satellites, or observers with Soviet forces in forward areas, or some combination of both. The intent of this paper is to evaluate the effectiveness of such a plan under various situations of attack. Hence, two propositions have been explored: (a) limited attack, using conventional forces-in-place, and (b) large-scale attack, with either a gradual buildup of forces or a rapid buildup of forces.

4. The available forces in place for limited attack consist of some 26 combat ready Soviet divisions augmented by a substantial number of East European Satellite divisions permanently deployed in forward areas. Significant additional Soviet forces are poised in the Southern USSR adjacent to the Turkish and Iranian borders. Most of the Soviet and some of the satellite forces appear to be prepared to mobilize and move in a matter of hours. A limited attack would consist of combining one small portion of these many units to move against an objective the attainment of which would not seriously risk a NATO nuclear response. Early warning under these circumstances, which must foretell the magnitude, nature and geographic area of the military thrust, is confined to very short notice indeed. Because a limited attack would involve only small portions of the existing forces in place, any Observation Post System designed to warn of such attack must be sufficiently sensitive to detect small-scale redeployments. The density of the East European transportation network, road and rail and the large number of units potentially involved, are such as to necessitate an unacceptably large number of fixed observation posts. For these reasons, two other possibilities merit consideration, the use of (low-altitude) air-mobile observer teams in the forward areas, or the placement of observers with Soviet units in the forward areas. Both of these alternatives have the appeal of being potentially effective measures requiring far fewer observer teams. Their effectiveness is predicated upon the belief that surveillance of division-sized units will reveal preparations for redeployment. 25X1B4f

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of implementing such measures are discussed in Reference (b).

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5. In the event that Bloc military forces undertake military action to achieve a limited objective, prompt communication with an early warning center is as essential a requirement as the early detection of movement. It is particularly under these circumstances that Observation Teams may provide a net addition to existing intelligence assets. Because the maximum time available for NATO response is a matter of only a few hours, any time lost in trying to communicate could prove critical.

6. The buildup of forces in the forward areas requires shipments of large numbers of troops and equipment from the USSR. Most of these shipments will move over the Soviet rail net and through a number of rail transloading zones along the Soviet border on their way to the Satellites. The Transportation Branch of COM has stated that, for various reasons, the establishment of Observation Posts at the border transloading zones is an effective way to monitor shipments of reinforcements to forward units, and that the extension of Observation Posts into Soviet territory becomes less valuable as it gets farther east (see Reference c). I concur with this position. The frequency of military maneuver and the high volume of traffic normally present on the railroad make it impossible to tell from observation alone that a shipment seen in Siberia is destined for the European Satellites. We shall, therefore, explore the efficacy of an Observation Post System monitoring the border transloading zones and key Baltic ports under the remaining conditions of attack 1) the gradual buildup of forces for large-scale attack and 2) the rapid buildup of forces for large-scale attack. This evaluation must be seen within the context of our available intelligence assets.

7. The use of the phrase "gradual buildup of forces" in the ACDA Draft U.S. Position Paper is in the context of the relatively slow movement of physical shipments over a protracted period of time. For purposes of examining the role of an Observation Post System which monitors military shipments to forward areas, I wish to use "gradual" to mean a period of time in excess of the minimum reaction time for existing intelligence assets to provide notice of significant reinforcement of forward areas within an acceptable level of confidence. As current resources and procedures function, my judgment is that this period may involve some four to six weeks. This judgment is based on several factors, the most important of which is our demonstrated inability to surveil Soviet military movements of any sort within the entire Western USSR. The few glimpses that are occasionally obtained are totally and uneniably inadequate and inappropriate for the purposes we are now discussing. They are inadequate because so few sightings are made that they form an insignificant sample. They are inappropriate because they are selectively controlled. This latter statement can be amplified by pointing out that many of the areas in which our greatest interest lies are closed to foreign visitors.

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8. As an alternative, we might be inclined to turn to technical sources for this information, but each one introduces its own problems of targeting the right place at the right time, and the inherent lag time required to process and disseminate the material.

9. Our intelligence capabilities improve somewhat when reinforcements actually reach their destinations in the satellites, particularly if the concentration occurs in East Germany in noticeable proportions. At this point, there are numerous intelligence assets that could be brought to bear on the problem. Extraordinary collection measures such as low-altitude overflights would be mounted, however, only after the existing routine apparatus had detected and assessed that a buildup was indeed occurring. I estimate that U.S. intelligence could expect, with a high degree of confidence, to detect gradual reinforcement of the forward areas, if such reinforcement extended over a period of not less than four to six weeks.

10. Against this background, two evaluations have been implied. Firstly, that for a gradual buildup extending over a period of more than four to six weeks, an Observation Post system which monitors the rail transiting zones along the Soviet border and key Baltic ports would be only one of several intelligence sources which could detect a significant reinforcement of units in the forward areas. Secondly, if by rapid reinforcement of units in the forward areas we mean a period of less than four weeks and particularly if that reinforcement is to be accomplished in the week or ten days preceding the attack, then this Observation Post system would play a critical role, for I have little confidence that any other existing intelligence source can warn us of such a movement in sufficient time to permit political or military countermeasures other than those already prepared by NATO.

11. The possibility of a Soviet capability to airlift conventional combat troops in a rapid build-up for large scale attack remains to be considered. It is apparent that such an airlift would not be detected by Observation Posts at railroad transiting points or at ports, but this does not necessarily constitute a significant gap in the Observation Post intelligence coverage unless a significant number of Soviet troops could be airlifted to forward areas in a time period short enough to prevent effective NATO garrison reinforcement. Analysis of the Soviet air transport capacity indicates that this could not be accomplished with their present military air transport inventory. Admittedly, a limited airlift capability could be achieved by mobilization of both military transports and the nearly 700 high performance aircraft of the Soviet civilian fleet, Aeroflot. The Aeroflot transport fleet would have a capacity to seat some 61,000 troops, although it would

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not be able to lift heavy equipment. It is believed, however, that the redeployment of sufficient aircraft from the Soviet civil transport fleet to support meaningful aerial reinforcement would be detected by existing technical intelligence sources in time to provide adequate early warning.

12. It is probable that Soviet military transport aircraft could be used to airlift Soviet troops and equipment to forward areas without detection by Observation Posts or other intelligence assets. Yet the limited numbers of transports available for this purpose lead us to conclude that a rapid forward area troop build-up of significant scale could not be achieved by such airlift. Soviet military transport aircraft number some 1600 light and medium transports, of which roughly 450 are high performance turbo-prop and turbo-jet aircraft. Approximately three-fourths of these high performance aircraft, including all those of the only two designs capable of transporting heavy, tank-sized equipment, are assigned to support the Soviet airborne troops. It is believed that airborne transports would not be reassigned to lift infantry troops at the cost of immobilizing the airborne troops.

13. Thus, there remain some 100 high performance aircraft and 1,300 piston engine aircraft, throughout the USSR, to effect an airlift. A Soviet estimate asserts that 600-750 high performance aircraft would be required to transport a motorized rifle division, not including tanks, and that this effort would necessitate two trips over a two day period. Under these circumstances, the Soviets are not believed to have an undetectable capability to reinforce forward areas by airlift with other than paratroop divisions.

14. A final matter to be considered is the impact of an Observation Post System on existing intelligence programs to collect observational intelligence. By way of introduction it should be noted that the impact on any existing program is a function of the extent and nature of the Observation Post System negotiated. As a result, the following comments are confined to that system we think most feasible, the observation of the border translocating zones and key Baltic ports.

15. Most observational reporting is aimed at the routine collection of information on military equipment in transit and against priority industrial and scientific installations, although there are additional

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programs for such problems as agriculture. The bulk of existing requirements could not be satisfied by Observation Teams at the borders. As far as can be judged in this Division, the advent of such Observation teams would cause only marginal duplication of existing programs, but would provide a critically needed addition.

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Annex A

1. The AGIA Draft Position Paper outlines major objectives for the Observation Post System in terms of specific functions related to three sources of hostile action, the ground threat, the tactical air threat and the strategic threat. These objectives are quoted below:

A. The Ground Threat

- 1) Provide indications of preparations for probing actions or "limited objective" attacks in Central Europe (or elsewhere) using forces already in position.
- 2) Provide indications of a gradual build-up of forces over a period of many months which might precede a large-scale attack in Central Europe, or elsewhere.
- 3) Provide more reliable and timely indications of a large-scale rapid build-up of military forces preparatory to a large-scale military attack in Central Europe (or elsewhere).

B. The Tactical Air Threat

- 1) Provide warning of hostile probing action using aircraft only, such as in the Berlin area.
- 2) Provide warning of tactical air preparations to support various types of ground activity.

C. The Strategic Threat

- 1) Provide indication of preparations for an air-
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- 2) Provide indication of preparation for an inter-continental aircraft and/or missile strike, in time of tension, or otherwise.

It is my view that an Observation Post System is unworkable under objectives b and c because 1) the number of teams required is so large and so placed that an agreement would not be negotiable and 2) even if a significant number of teams could be placed at highly sensitive Soviet and Warsaw Pact missile and air installations, the nature of the tactical and strategic weapons systems, their deployment patterns, rapid reaction times and constant routine patrols and/or exercises would not permit the observation teams to discern the commencement of a

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hostilities in sufficient time and with sufficient confidence to allow political or military counteraction. Following are the most significant reasons for these conclusions.

2. If we are to hope that an observation team can provide advanced warning of hostile action involving the use of aircraft, we are forced to assume that a trained observer, surveilling an airfield, can reliably foretell those aircraft which take-off for routine patrol or training flights from those which follow identical procedures but engage in hostile actions. I doubt that this is possible. However, the ease with which aircraft can be redeployed around the observation teams would seriously impair the effectiveness of the Observation Post System unless there were so many teams on airfields that significant redeployment became impossible. In the case of long-range bomber bases, where a relatively small number of teams might observe most of the potential staging areas, the expectation of early warning is based on the anticipation that long-range bombers will participate in the initial strike. If the role of these bombers staging through observed long-range air bases is changed from initial strike to damage assessment and follow-up strike after an initial missile attack, then any hope for a prior warning of hostilities evaporates. The varying role of the bomber in surprise attack means that as time passes, we must place less confidence in our abilities to detect an impending attack from bomber activities.

3. As for long-range missiles, it is impossible to distinguish between a dry run practice launch and an actual launch until the missile ignites. By the time the missile is launched, the short interval between lift-off and arrival on target means that the observer can give only minutes of advanced warning, if he can communicate at all. In no instance would the advanced warning allow sufficient time for political negotiation or military redeployment.

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